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3770th Meeting

Wednesday, 23 April 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Somavía
	China	Mr. Wang Xuexian
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Japan	Mr. Owada
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Poland	Mr. Wlosowicz
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Richardson

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

97-85458 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Ethiopia, Italy, Kuwait, the Netherlands and Tunisia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mohammed (Ethiopia), Mr. Fulci (Italy), Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait), Mr. Berteling (Netherlands) and Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/1997/324, which contains the text of a letter dated 16 April 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of Kuwait to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the text of resolution 5638, of 31 March 1997, adopted at the one hundred and seventh regular session of the Council of the League of Arab States, entitled "The situation in Somalia".

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: It has been more than four years since the Security Council adopted resolution 794 (1992), when the humanitarian situation in Somalia demanded the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force to create a climate propitious for humanitarian assistance. Today, more than two years after the withdrawal of the force from Somalia, this meeting provides an opportunity to take stock of developments in Somalia, to exchange views and to conduct consultations on the measures the international community should take in order to promote the establishment of a central authority that enjoys the support of all Somali factions so that the people of Somalia may find stability and begin a life of prosperity and development. In that connection, Mr. President, I would like to thank you very sincerely for having taken the initiative to convene this meeting. I hope that the Council will continue to conduct such meetings in the future.

Despite the humanitarian nature of the intervention of the United Nations in Somalia and the deployment of an international force under Chapter VII of the Charter because of the exceptional circumstances in Somalia at that time - most importantly the absence of a central Government that could extend its authority to the entire country - the humanitarian tragedy and the continuation of the civil war have claimed many innocent victims. While the United Nations has been successful in its humanitarian intervention, it has been less successful with the establishment of local political and social institutions capable of taking over for the State institutions destroyed in the civil war.

The situation today in Somalia differs radically from the situation that prevailed in the past. Numerous regional initiatives have led to many positive developments, the first of which was the Nairobi meeting last October. I would like, in that connection, to thank the Government of Kenya for taking that important initiative, particularly since Mr. Hussein Aidid participated in that meeting alongside other Somali factions. Ethiopian mediation too was successful in organizing the Sodere meeting in which more than 26 factions participated, and which concluded with the establishment of the National Salvation Council. During February and March, the Italian Special Envoy, Mr. Cassini, was able to organize two meetings between Mr. Ali Mahdi Mohamed and Mr. Hussein Aidid, and efforts are under way to have Mr. Osman Atto participate in the consultations so that the reunification of Mogadishu can be achieved and the airport and port of the capital can be opened.

Other developments in Somalia were the participation of the National Salvation Council in the session of the League of Arab States last March, and the issuance of the Sodere documents. This led to the declaration of the Arab League that it would finance, with the voluntary contributions of its members, the holding of a national reconciliation conference in Bossaso as well as the necessary assistance for mediation efforts within Somalia.

The report of the Secretary-General contains important proposals, and the Egyptian delegation hopes that they will be given serious consideration. They include the designation of a new Special Envoy and upgrading the size and role of the United Nations Political Office for Somalia. There are a number of options to choose from, and at present Egypt supports the Secretary-General sending a Special Envoy to Somalia on a mission similar to that of Ambassador Chrétien, who has been in the Great Lakes region in the past few months. The new Special Envoy should be sent with a view to establishing contacts with the Somali war lords and the representatives of the Somali people, and perhaps also in order to visit neighbouring States and other interested States and to consult with competent regional organizations with a view to presenting a comprehensive report to the Secretary-General on measures to be taken, at which time the Security Council could consider them and adopt an appropriate resolution.

The outcome of recent initiatives and consultations on Somalia indicates that there are positive trends which must be exploited, because it is unacceptable for the present state of affairs to continue. It is necessary now to reach an agreement on the nature of the United Nations role in Somalia. The delegation of Egypt calls for a substantial modification of this role, and it calls upon the international community, represented here, to assume its responsibilities vis-à-vis the Somali people. This is why we consider that serious thought needs to be given to a new United Nations initiative to help define the character of further initiatives which the United Nations might take in this area.

I hope it is clear that such action can in no way replace any local or individual initiatives. It can only be complementary to such initiatives, and it should pursue specific objectives. It should emphasize United Nations support for regional efforts and push the factions to participate in such efforts. It should take account of the positions of neighbouring States, other interested States and competent regional and international organizations, with a view to recommending to the Secretary-General measures to be taken. We should be wary of violations of the embargo on arms shipments to Somalia, which was adopted in Security Council resolution 733 (1992). And it should reaffirm the United Nations commitment to a peaceful settlement of the crisis.

Egypt underscores the importance of stability in Somalia both in the light of the strong historical, cultural and other links between Somalia and our country — which extend back to the sixteenth century B.C. — and because Somalia is a fellow Arab and African country. In March Cairo welcomed a delegation of the National Salvation Council, and, last week, Mr. Hussein Aidid. We will continue to maintain contacts with all the factions and representatives of the Somali people without exception in order to support the national reconciliation effort. We reaffirm that Egypt does not oppose other initiatives, because all international and regional initiatives are complementary and pursue a common goal: the achievement of national reconciliation. Egypt will also continue to provide humanitarian and cultural assistance to all regions of Somalia. Because of the appearance of cholera and malnutrition, it is extremely important to respond to humanitarian needs in Somalia, and the international community must provide assistance.

The efforts of the United Nations and of regional and international organizations to support national reconciliation depend on a number of considerations, the most important of which is that the international community must not recognize any authority in Somalia that does not represent all factions of the Somali people. Secondly, the embargo on arms shipments should be respected and strictly monitored. The Somali factions must be persuaded to examine all the options open to them so that they can select the best and most appropriate. The international community must continue all necessary humanitarian and development assistance to all regions of Somalia without exception. The territorial integrity of Somalia and the principle of non-intervention in its internal affairs must be respected.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that the main responsibility for stability in Somalia rests with the Somali people themselves. But at the same time, we must recognize that it is important and necessary for the United Nations to play a role and to make efforts to assist the Somali people in overcoming the present crisis.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): A year ago, during the last open Security Council debate on Somalia, the situation in that country seemed heartbreaking. The reconciliation process was a dead letter, the nation was coming apart, the humanitarian situation was deteriorating daily. We wondered whether the international community could undertake something it had never done before. Regional initiatives seemed to provide the only hope for re-launching the peace efforts.

For a year now it has indeed been the regional initiatives that have taken the lead in making it possible to progress towards a resumption of negotiations among

the Somali factions. We must pay a tribute to these efforts, in particular those of Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt and the relevant regional organizations. We also appreciate the activities of the United Nations Political Office for Somalia, as well as those of the Special Envoy of the European Community, Mr. Elling, and those of the Italian representative, Mr. Cassini. We also pay a tribute to those who are working in Somalia, under difficult circumstances, to provide assistance to the Somali population.

The resumption of negotiations among Somalis is encouraging. This process can be successful only if all Somali parties participate in it, which is as yet not the case. The international community must try to convince Somali leaders that there is no alternative to negotiations to achieve national reconciliation. This effort must involve in particular those who might be tempted by the idea of secession. As is the case throughout Africa, the maintenance of the territorial integrity and national unity of Somalia is essential to any settlement.

At the moment, the best chances for progress lie with the continued efforts of States of the region, of other interested States and of regional organizations such as the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development, based in Nairobi. Strengthening the United Nations role does not seem possible unless it is very gradual — and unless it is accepted by the Somali leaders, who must demonstrate that they sincerely want to participate in negotiations to achieve national reconciliation.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): China supports and welcomes the Council's holding of an open debate on the question of Somalia. We hope that this debate will enable the international community to focus more attention on the question of Somalia; facilitate the efforts of the parties concerned, led by African countries, to resolve the Somali question; and help the factions in Somalia to work more actively to find a political settlement in the interest of national reconciliation and peace.

We have noted with pleasure the positive changes that have taken place in Somalia in recent months. We appreciate the efforts made by the factions concerned in Somalia to achieve reconciliation through political consultations. China has always held that the settlement of the Somali question will ultimately depend on the Somali people themselves and that national reconciliation is the only way out for the Somali people. As a Somali saying goes, "Only dialogue can bring about consensus". We hope that the various factions in Somalia will seek national reconciliation through fraternal dialogue and establish a broadly based coalition government.

The leaders of various factions in Somalia should realize that the African continent is entering a new historical period of seeking peace, stability and development. Somalia has, by comparison, fallen behind. Years of civil war have already seriously hurt the country; further fighting will only aggravate its backwardness. The Chinese Government and people feel saddened by this situation. We believe that peace among the factions in Somalia will benefit their country, while fighting will hurt them all. It is now high time to beat swords into ploughshares.

Over a period of time, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the League of Arab States, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and some African countries have made positive and useful endeavours to promote political consultations and negotiations among the factions in Somalia. We express our deep admiration for the determination of these organizations, and particularly the African countries, to seek strength through unity and to resolve problems in their region. China welcomes and supports these efforts and calls on the factions in Somalia to cooperate closely with them. At the same time, we hold that these efforts should also receive firm and effective support and cooperation from the international community, including the United Nations.

The United Nations, particularly this Council, has the responsibility, and ought to take measures, to contribute constructively to the settlement of the Somali question. In this connection, we are of the view that the role of the United Nations Political Office for Somalia should be strengthened and that this Council should consider positively the Secretary-General's recommendations, made in his report (S/1997/135) of 17 February 1997, to designate a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on the question of Somalia, to send a United Nations/OAU joint fact-finding mission and to establish a Secretary-General's trust fund.

In conclusion, we call on the international community to give more attention to the question of Somalia and actively to help find a proper solution. The Chinese Government is ready to work together with other parties to this end.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): The conflict in Somalia has certainly gone on for far too long. But it is not fair to say, in our view, that the international community has forgotten Somalia. Numerous efforts have been made to bring the warring factions together. We welcome the part played by the Organization of African Unity, by the Arab League, by the European Union, by Egypt and by Italy. We attach particular importance to the regional efforts led by Kenya and Ethiopia. The Ethiopian-sponsored Sodere declaration and the Kenyan-sponsored Nairobi agreement can play a vital role in laying the foundations on which a political settlement can eventually be built. But it is important that the Nairobi and Sodere agreements are seen as complementary to each other. Participation of all the Somali parties, including those in the north-west, is necessary for the process of reconciliation to stand any chance of success.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Security Council have also shown their concern about the continuing conflict in Somalia and their support for regional and other efforts to initiate a political dialogue. In February the Secretary-General issued a report calling for more resources for humanitarian relief and rehabilitation in Somalia, expressing support for regional efforts to achieve a political settlement and calling on all States to comply with the arms embargo. In response, the Security Council issued a presidential statement firmly backing the approach set out by the Secretary-General. At its fifty-third session, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights also issued a statement welcoming regional efforts to promote a political dialogue.

In the light of the efforts being made by Kenya, Ethiopia and others, we ourselves see no need for a new initiative on Somalia at this point. But it is vital to ensure that these various efforts are properly coordinated and fully complementary with each other.

This is also the moment to recall that none of these efforts can succeed unless the leaders of the various parties in Somalia show the necessary political will. The main responsibility for achieving national reconciliation and for restoring peace rests with them. Here I agree with what my Chinese colleague has just said.

Finally, I would like to say a word about the humanitarian situation. The recent drought highlights the continuing need for humanitarian assistance. The United Kingdom has contributed £54 million to humanitarian relief in Somalia since 1991. We shall continue to do what we can to alleviate the situation there. But successful relief operations require the cooperation of the parties on the ground, including security, freedom of movement and the opening of seaports and airports. We have been concerned to hear of the problems which humanitarian agencies have encountered in Mogadishu and elsewhere. All the parties in that country have an obligation not only to step up their efforts to achieve peace, but also to ensure that the valuable work of the humanitarian agencies is not impeded. The leaders of those parties must stop jockeying for power and concentrate on the needs of the people they are supposed to represent.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): Allow me first to thank the President of the Security Council for convening the first open debate on Somalia in over a year. We believe that today's meeting provides an important opportunity to refocus the attention of the international community on Somalia and to deliver a clear message to the Somali people that their plight is not forgotten, but is being actively addressed by the international community.

Since the last open debate in March 1996, there have been some positive developments in the Somali peace process: the leaders of three major factions were brought together in Nairobi last year; the two faction leaders in the Mogadishu area have met several times since last January to discuss the restoration of peace to the capital city; and most importantly, the leaders of 26 factions gathered at Sodere, Ethiopia, and took an important step towards the creation of a broad-based national government last January.

In this regard, we would like to pay tribute to the various concerned Governments and organizations that continue to contribute their invaluable energy and effort to furthering the peace process. Our special thanks go to the Governments of Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt and Italy, the Organization of African Unity, the European Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the League of Arab States.

Despite this progress, the remainder of the journey to reconciliation and peace in Somalia is likely to be as unpredictable and arduous as it has been so far. Although the Sodere meeting was a significant step forward, it was overshadowed by the conspicuous non-participation of Mr. Aidid and Mr. Egal, who continue to disagree with the goals of the meeting and the process of reconciliation which it has launched.

Another cause for concern is the exclusion of Mr. Osman Atto from the meeting of the faction leaders

in Mogadishu. All things considered, the main stumbling block in the peace process remains unchanged: the intransigence of the major faction leaders.

We believe, therefore, that if further progress is to be made in the Somali peace process, the international community, and the regional peacemakers in particular, should focus on achieving two tasks: first, Aidid and Egal need to be brought on board in the Sodere peace process; and secondly, the three Mogadishu leaders need to be brought together to reach agreement on the restoration of stability to the capital and its vicinity. In this context, my delegation urges Mr. Aidid and Mr. Egal, in unambiguous terms, to put aside their parochial ambitions and join the National Reconciliation Conference at Bossaso, scheduled for 10 June.

In our view, the Security Council should play a proactive role in the Somali peace process in close coordination with regional efforts. It was in this context that my delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals for action by the Council, as contained in his report of February 1997. Those proposals, we believe, must be continuously followed up and put into action in accordance with the evolving situation in Somalia. In this connection, we recognize and support the important role that the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) has played in monitoring the situation and facilitating dialogue among the parties concerned. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's decision to extend the mandate of UNPOS.

On the humanitarian front, the international community should be mindful of the ever present threat of a deterioration in conditions and stand ready to respond to emergencies. However, relief activities can only be effectively carried out by the international community if they enjoy the full cooperation of the Somali factions. In this regard, my delegation is deeply concerned at the continuation of acts of violence against humanitarian personnel of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. We strongly condemn such acts of violence and urge the Somali factions to guarantee the safety and freedom of movement of all aid workers.

Finally, we would like to emphasize the responsibility of the international community to ensure the implementation of the arms embargo on Somalia, as established by resolution 733 (1992). We are certain that all of us present in this Chamber share the view that the illegal flow of arms is clearly a serious destabilizing factor in the Somali situation and that the easy availability of arms undermines the chances of political settlement. As Chairman of the Sanctions Committee for Somalia, I regret to note that, despite the best efforts of the Committee, this problem could not be addressed in an effective manner, as desired by the international community.

My delegation would like to suggest that at an appropriate moment the Security Council seriously re-examine how to improve the effectiveness of the arms embargo regime as a whole. Otherwise, allowing embargo violations to continue unchecked might not only damage the Council's credibility, but also render meaningless all the efforts to achieve peace. We believe that the Security Council, beyond merely urging compliance, should now explore further concrete measures to enhance the embargo's effectiveness.

In closing, we would like to reiterate the consistent view of the Republic of Korea that the ultimate responsibility for realizing peace and reconciliation lies with the Somali people themselves, and that there is little that the international community can do unless the Somali leaders show the political will and commitment necessary to achieve a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

My delegation hopes that today's debate will bring forth many constructive views and suggestions on the situation in Somalia and that the conclusions we reach will be duly followed up by the Security Council and the Secretariat.

Mr. Owada (Japan): After many years of intense internal strife, the situation in Somalia remains a source of grave international concern. The failure of all the various factions to join together in the search for a comprehensive and lasting settlement continues to rob the people of Somalia of the right to pursue their livelihoods and embark on the long process of national reconciliation and reconstruction.

Ongoing, sincere efforts by a number of countries and international organizations are beginning to show some promise, however. We were particularly encouraged by the opening of talks in Nairobi last October among three faction leaders — Hussein Aidid, Ali Mahdi Mohamed and Osman Atto — at the initiative of President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya. In this connection, however, it is to be noted with great regret that Mr. Atto has been excluded from the talks, which have continued since the beginning of this month in Mogadishu, within the framework of a joint commission

on reconciliation. My delegation believes that, as the leader of an important faction, Mr. Atto's participation is crucial to the advancement of the comprehensive peace process.

Another encouraging step forward is the High-level Consultative Meeting of Somali Political Movements, which was convened in Sodere in January on the initiative of Ethiopia. One significant result of that effort was the formation of the National Salvation Council, which has decided to convene a National Reconciliation Conference in June this year.

My Government also wishes to express its gratitude to Egypt for its recent effort, on behalf of the League of Arab States, to bring the leaders of rival factions together. We also pay tribute to Italy for the contributions it has made, through its Special Envoy, to advancing the peace process. The United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) is also to be commended for the vital role it has been playing as a liaison between the United Nations and the various factions and in encouraging the leaders of those factions to seek a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

Each of these endeavours is a necessary and valuable contribution; they do not by themselves, however, add up to a comprehensive solution. What is essential is that the Somali faction leaders now summon the political will to join together and meld these separate efforts into a unified drive to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement. The international community should redouble its efforts to induce the faction leaders to do so, and in particular to induce Mr. Hussein Aidid, the leader of a faction that claims to control most of the country, to enter into negotiations with all parties. Japan, for its part, is prepared to cooperate in such mediation efforts.

Demanding our urgent attention under the present circumstances is the humanitarian dimension of the situation in Somalia. In many parts of the country, and especially in the area around Mogadishu, indiscriminate acts of violence continue to jeopardize the safety of the civilian population, as well as that of United Nations personnel and others engaged in international humanitarian relief efforts. We in the international community should call upon the faction leaders to abide strictly by international humanitarian law and other norms in the humanitarian field, and control the actions of their subordinates, in order to guarantee the safety and human rights of civilians, as well as the freedom of movement of international relief workers. We should also urge them to cooperate in reopening the seaport and airport of Mogadishu in order to facilitate the delivery of much-needed food and medical supplies.

It is important that the international community extend full support and assistance to the process of national reconstruction and rehabilitation once a comprehensive peace settlement is achieved. Japan, for its part, in 1996 contributed $1.7 million to the World Food Programme to assist internally affected people in Somalia and 700 thousand Swiss francs to the International Committee of the Red Cross for its activities for Somalia. When stability is restored throughout the country, it will be ready to extend social and economic development assistance as well.

It bears repeating that the achievement of a lasting and comprehensive peace ultimately depends on the leaders of the Somali people themselves. Only when all the factions set aside their rivalries and join together to advance the peace process can the people of Somalia turn their efforts to rebuilding their nation. Japan strongly hopes that they will be given the opportunity to do so in the near future. When they do, they may be assured that their efforts will have the strong and willing support of the international community.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian Federation has consistently favoured the achievement of a comprehensive, lasting political settlement and national reconciliation in Somalia. An effective, peaceful settlement of this protracted conflict is possible only through the further development of the negotiating process to include all the main Somali factions and groups and through establishing a broadly representative Government on that basis.

We are pleased to note the definite progress made in establishing a dialogue among the Somalis. This was achieved recently through the energetic mediation efforts of regional organizations and neighbouring and other interested States. We would like to underscore in particular the role personally played by the President of Kenya, Mr. Arap Moi.

Some promising results came out of the recent consultations in Cairo with the leaders of the prominent Somali factions. Judging from available information, there are grounds to expect that the results of these consultations may promote an expansion of the basis for the dialogue among Somalis.

The political support of the United Nations for regional mediation efforts will continue in the future to be an important factor to strengthen and stimulate efforts to achieve a Somali settlement. However, we concur with the view that Somali people bear the main responsibility for the restoration of peace and normal living conditions in their country. It is precisely their willingness to espouse the logic of peace and to find generally accepted solutions that in the final analysis will determine the success of any mediation effort.

This applies fully to the need for the Somali factions to ensure appropriate security conditions for the operations of international humanitarian organizations. We support efforts to provide humanitarian assistance and support for the rehabilitation of Somalia drawing upon the capacities of the United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Somalia and on the basis of coordinated efforts with other international organizations in this sphere.

It is also important to ensure unfaltering compliance with the international embargo on deliveries of weapons to Somalia, for which the Security Council has made repeated appeals. We support the proposal of the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to find ways and means to enhance the effectiveness of the embargo regime, including through the strengthening of coordination in the Security Council committee on the embargo against Somalia.

Mr. Somavía (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): There has been an empty seat in the General Assembly for several years, the seat of Somalia. The people of Somalia is not represented and cannot make its voice heard in the United Nations system due to the failure of its leaders to agree. This is also the reason why it is not present at this debate. This situation reflects what is occurring on the ground itself. Somalia is a country divided into factions in which not even the United Nations can keep a resident office and in which humanitarian agencies frequently face serious problems in carrying out their assistance programmes. These, as we all know, include their personnel being the victims of incidents and violence.

A little over a year ago, in March 1996, we were meeting in this Chamber in an open debate on the situation in Somalia. At that time the tone of the statements was generally one of pessimism and uncertainty. However, beginning at the end of last year we began to receive somewhat more encouraging news. A process of consultations which began in Nairobi and continued in Sodere has been bearing fruit. The Sodere declarations of January 1997 established the National Salvation Council. If all goes well, there will be a conference on Somali national reconciliation in June.

This entire process is obviously affected by the reluctance of two leaders, Mr. Hussein Aidid and Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, to join it. Despite this, the members of the National Salvation Council met recently in Cairo with representatives of the League of Arab States, which stands ready to help in convening the June conference.

From Europe, Italy has for a long time been concerned about the situation in Somalia, and the work of its representative in Mogadishu has had its successes. For all these reasons, we would like to pay tribute to the Governments of Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt and Italy and to the League of Arab States and the European Union. We should include the efforts of the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of the Islamic Conference among those that have been carried out by the international community to promote the future of the Somali people.

We also underscore the work carried out by the Secretary-General and by the United Nations Political Office for Somalia in Nairobi. But above all we congratulate those in Somalia who have decided to work together to ensure that Somalia will again become a respected nation at peace. These are positive signs that we did not have before us a year ago.

We must reiterate that responsibility in the search for a solution to the political crisis in Somalia rests with Somalis themselves, and particularly with the leaders of the various factions. Most of these leaders are trying to find a way to resolve the situation in their country and are taking steps in that direction with the assistance of friendly countries. However, there are still some who are recalcitrant. Some political leaders are unable to go beyond their personal interests and quest for power to subjugate themselves to the interests of the people whom they claim to represent. These very few leaders should heed the voice of their people, who seek peace and reconciliation. On this occasion they should also heed the voice of the international community, which is willing to support that peace.

Looking at this in historical terms, the Somali political leadership was a victim of the cold war. It tried to play super- Power off against super-Power, switching alliances and loyalties and ultimately finding itself with a

destroyed and underdeveloped country in which few took notice at the international level. In playing cold-war roulette, the country was bankrupted.

Despite the indifference of many, the international community took action. It decided to help restore a degree of order and in particular to avert a massive humanitarian tragedy. The Security Council approved the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), and the humanitarian community set out to alleviate the crisis.

Once again, however, infighting among the leaders stood in the way of a stable United Nations presence, causing a peace mission to be aborted, and the country was left to its own devices.

Once again, we find that the leaders of certain factions are refusing to cooperate in the search for a joint solution. But they are, as always, leading a comfortable existence, while the people who live in the territories that they control are suffering the consequences of their leaders' political intransigence. The leaders' recalcitrant attitude seems to say "Somalia as a country interests me only if I can control it."

The Somalis themselves must determine how to resolve their internal problems. What is important is for the Somalis to be able to coexist peacefully among themselves and with their neighbours by means of a legitimate democratic political organization.

The structures of such an organization must correspond to the characteristics and interests of the Somalis themselves. Whether they wish a centralized government, or one with limited central power, a confederation or a system of clans and subclans, this is a domestic matter that they should be able to resolve among themselves. In other words, the international community is not necessarily pushing a classically Western state model.

In describing possible political organization alternatives, I should like to emphasize a limitation that we believe the United Nations system has in tackling conflicts such as Somalia in a structural way. The Charter of the United Nations emphasizes the role of preventive diplomacy in reaching an agreement among the parties to a conflict. The drafters of the Charter understood that the parties to the conflict would normally be nation-States — in other words, these would be inter-State conflicts.

However, the reality today is that most conflicts that appear on the agenda of the Security Council, such as the one in Somalia, are domestic, and are more like civil wars than conflicts between nations. We have found that, as a result, the instruments of traditional diplomacy are not as effective in such situations. We believe that in the future the Security Council, in order to be truly modern and contemporary, will increasingly have to resort to other sources of experience in settling conflicts. I refer here to experiences that are related more to interpersonal conflicts, to problems of coexistence among different religions or races in the same city or territory, to experiences relating to participation in and the easing of tensions within a community, and to confidence-building among different peoples and groups, rather than among States. There is a great deal of experience available in these areas. Using it is the challenge facing the Council.

Those who still refuse to participate in the peace process must understand that they have a unique opportunity today: to let it be known what type of society they desire. Otherwise, even though many obstacles stand in the way, if, as we hope, the majority of the Somali leaders continue to pursue the peace process, it will move forward with the support of the international community, despite those who oppose it.

Having said this, I should like to express our special concern about the humanitarian situation of the Somalis. This people, and those who wish to help them, must not be subjected to violence and must enjoy security so that they can develop as human beings. This is a point on which the international community cannot compromise. In this connection, we would like to reiterate what we said last year in the Council's debate on Somalia.

Finally, Mr. President, I should like to thank you for your initiative in convening this formal Security Council meeting on the situation in Somalia. This reflects Portugal's interest in expanding public debates, which Chile fully shares. This provides an excellent opportunity to hear delegations that are not members of the Council speak on an item that has long concerned us.

The President: I thank the representative of Chile for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Osvald (Sweden): Later in the debate, the Netherlands will speak on behalf of the European Union. Sweden fully supports that statement.

The armed conflict cannot continue in Somalia. National reconciliation is now necessary and is a prerequisite for sustainable peace and development.

Without reconciliation the humanitarian suffering will continue, and Somalia will remain a destabilizing factor in the region.

The United Nations and the international community as a whole must help Somalia on its way from chaos and suffering to normalization and development. The ultimate responsibility for national reconciliation, however, rests with the Somalis themselves. The Somalis need and deserve leaders who do not act like warlords but like leaders who are prepared to overlook narrow individual ambitions and focus on the national interest.

The ongoing peace efforts, such as the Sodere and Nairobi initiatives, by regional and other interested States and organizations, have the full support of my Government. There is, however, a need for further coordination of the initiatives, leading in the end to an integrated process with the participation of all Somali leaders.

The Somali peace and reconciliation process must ultimately involve all layers of society. While we welcome the latest progress made to achieve a negotiated settlement among Somali factions, we must not forget that the results will not be sustainable unless reconciliation efforts are also focused on rebuilding the civil society on regional and local levels. The European Union and non-governmental organizations such as the Life and Peace Institute make important contributions in this field.

The leading roles played by the regional States and organizations in the resolution of the Somali conflict are commendable. At the same time, Sweden welcomes the preparedness of the United Nations Secretary-General — should he consider it helpful — to designate a Special Envoy for Somalia.

The control of the warlords over the Somali people is based not least on the possession of arms. The United Nations and its Member States must ensure that the arms embargo is adhered to. Violations should be reported and acted upon. Also, international assistance should facilitate demilitarization of Somali society. Demobilization of militias requires that alternative means of subsistence be created.

The international community must sustain its commitment to peace-building in Somalia and not scale down the assistance in a situation which might be less dramatic, but remains extremely fragile. Peace-building and the resolution of humanitarian crises should be seen in a long-term perspective. They must not be reduced to ad hoc interventions.

In the present Somali situation of semi-peace, semi-war, international assistance needs to be closely coordinated within the framework of a shared approach on central issues. In the recent United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal, important steps were taken towards developing such a joint strategy. My Government intends to contribute to this Appeal and encourages others to do the same.

Mr. Sáenz Biolley (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to express the satisfaction of the Government of Costa Rica at the Security Council's continuing consideration of the case of Somalia, this time by holding a formal meeting in order to approach this subject with the greatest transparency, through the participation of all the States Members of the Organization.

It is true that the evolution of events in Somalia is frequently frustrating and discouraging, but this meeting demonstrates the firm will and steadfast commitment of the United Nations to resolving the crisis in that country.

First, I wish to say how pleased my Government is with the achievements of the process begun in Sodere and Nairobi, but also to reiterate the urgent necessity for the Somali parties that have not yet joined in the process to do so as soon as possible. The Somalis are a great people beset by great troubles, and they deserve a future of peace and prosperity. It is to that great people that the leaders of the various Somali clans and political groups owe their greatest efforts, and it is for that people that they should make peace.

Costa Rica would like to congratulate the countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, as well as Kenya, Ethiopia, Italy and Egypt, for their special efforts to bring the Somali parties to the negotiation table, and we encourage them to continue those efforts. We also believe that the United Nations should follow closely the Somali peace process and support the international actors that are trying to help the parties find a peaceful and negotiated solution that would, among other things, guarantee the stability, unity, integrity and sovereignty of Somalia. In this regard, the United Nations, as suggested by the Secretary-General in his report of 17 February 1997, should support the Sodere process and establish a trust fund to cover the enormous costs entailed in organizing these meetings.

As part of this international effort to support a peaceful solution to the conflict in Somalia, Costa Rica urges all States to respect the arms embargo established in resolution 733 (1992).

We would also like to express our appreciation to all the humanitarian organizations that provide assistance and relief to the people of Somalia at great risk to their own lives. We are concerned that the missions of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization have had security problems recently, and we urge the parties, particularly those in Mogadishu, to provide protection and security to the officials of all international humanitarian organizations.

We are also concerned about the situation of Somali refugees. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), on 27 April the repatriation programme for the Somali refugees in the east of Somalia will resume. This programme initially began on 28 February last. To date, 2,500 refugees in north-west Somalia have been repatriated, and it is hoped that some 10,000 more will be repatriated by the end of May. These refugees will receive food aid for nine months and the equivalent of $30 in local currency. Costa Rica hopes that these repatriation measures will be enough to assure them a better future. We also believe that special attention should be given to Somali refugees in Kenya who left their homes because of the prevailing insecurity in southern Somalia.

In my country's opinion, it is essential to deal with and resolve the humanitarian problems besetting Somalia. In order to provide humanitarian assistance to the Somali people, it is indispensable, among other things, to open the port and airport of Mogadishu, as well as to eliminate the so-called green line, which not only splits the city but also impedes access to and use of the international terminals indispensable for delivering humanitarian assistance. It is a duty of the parties to the conflict to eliminate such obstacles to humanitarian assistance. In this regard, Costa Rica supports the suggestion of the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations Political Office for Somalia and possibly, when conditions permit, to reopen it in Mogadishu.

I would like to conclude by expressing my Government's hope that all parties to the conflict, with the support of the international community, will shoulder their responsibilities in promoting a solution to the crisis and reconciliation in Somalia. This requires openness, tolerance and understanding, and my Government is sure that the various Somali factions will now demonstrate by means of clear actions their readiness for peace and reconciliation. To that end, we support the holding of a National Reconciliation Conference in Bossaso, beginning on 10 June, convened by the National Salvation Council, and we trust that all factions will participate in that meeting.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): It has been six years since Somali faction leaders overthrew the Government of the dictator Siad Barre and two years since the withdrawal of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) forces from Somalia, yet the Somalis have still not formed a national government.

The United States believes that the Somali faction leaders themselves must make the difficult decisions required to reach a viable reconciliation process. We have followed and will continue to follow closely events in the Horn of Africa region. We support the efforts of regional leaders, the Organization of African Unity, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the League of Arab States, Italy and others who have tried to facilitate negotiations.

But outsiders cannot bring peace to Somalia. The international community can only assist the efforts of Somalis to reach their own solutions to the crisis and to move towards peace, stability, law, order and national reconciliation. We urge all Somali leaders to end the divisions that keep them from political reconciliation and to work towards a broad-based national government that represents all the Somali people.

Mr. Mahugu (Kenya): For the first time in many months, the Security Council is having an open debate on the situation in Somalia. Today's meeting is particularly significant because it comes at a time when the people of Somalia are once again attempting to establish dialogue among themselves.

Somalia has travelled a long road. My delegation recalls that in October 1996, the main factions, led by Hussein Aidid, Osman Atto, and Ali Mahdi, meeting in Nairobi, restarted the process of dialogue when they agreed to reopen the ports and committed themselves to establishing a broad-based all-inclusive Government. Unfortunately, that agreement was short lived and hostilities resumed soon after.

In December 1996, 27 political parties, meeting in Sodere, Ethiopia, resolved to establish a National Salvation Council which would form a transitional authority for Somalia. Unfortunately, the 27 parties did not include all the major factions, and as a result the outcome was rejected by the Aidid faction, which refused to join the process.

Other efforts by members of the international community, and particularly the Government of Italy, have sought to add to or complement these efforts. More recently, meetings have been held in Cairo. We welcome all these efforts since they encourage dialogue and political negotiations among the people of Somalia. But they are not enough and serve only as a foundation. We can only remind the leaders of the Somali factions that they themselves will have to resolve the problem of Somalia and that no one else can solve their problem. They therefore must go the extra mile and learn to accommodate and be flexible as they proceed in the difficult task of finding common ground. Any meaningful effort must be all-inclusive to accommodate all parties.

We urge the international community to keep the issue of Somalia on its agenda and to continue to respond to the needs of the people of Somalia even in these difficult times. The United Nations agencies have in particular continued to monitor and respond to humanitarian needs. The need for humanitarian assistance will no doubt remain as long as the political problem remains unsolved. While my delegation calls on the international community to continue to render assistance to Somalia, we at the same time call on the Somali leaders to respect international humanitarian law. There have been many cases in which international personnel have been killed, wounded or subjected to kidnapping or extortion. The lack of security for relief and rehabilitation operations remains an impediment to the delivery of assistance to the populations in need and must be carefully looked into by faction leaders.

As a member of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which has been continuously involved in the search for peace in Somalia, I wish to stress the following points. First, the prospects for peace in Somalia have never been greater and the international community should seize this opportunity to facilitate negotiations and dialogue. Secondly, all efforts aimed at securing peace in Somalia should be complementary and coordinated with the IGAD initiative that is already in place. Thirdly, the planned Bossaso conference should be provided with material and financial support to ensure its success.

We must, all of us together, help the people of Somalia to help themselves. A regional initiative is in place, and we call on the international community to support it. Kenya will continue to do all in its power to assist the people of Somalia in the search for peace.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) (*interpretation from French*): Since the fall of former President Siad Barre in January 1991, chaos — even anarchy — has reigned in Somalia, leading to the destruction of all political and administrative structures indispensable for the functioning of the State. Deadly clan warfare ravaged the country, one of the world's poorest. An unprecedented famine afflicted a large segment of the population, compelling millions of people to live in subhuman conditions. The international community could not have failed to react. The course of subsequent events is too well known for us to dwell on.

But it is certainly difficult to refer to the present situation in Somalia without recalling the tragedy and painful circumstances that led the United Nations, despite its positive and beneficial work on behalf of the Somali people, to leave the country in 1994. How many pictures of desolation, misery and atrocity still live in our memories! Many, too many, Blue Helmets lost their lives in a mission whose lofty purpose cannot be overemphasized, because it reflected our humanitarian instinct and our moral responsibility to rush to the aid of people in distress. No, we cannot forget.

But it is to the Security Council's honour that it has today devoted an open debate to Somalia, whose people have fallen victim to a situation over which they have no control and do not deserve to be abandoned to their sad fate. Somalia continues to distinguish itself by the existence in its territory of so many political factions and armed groups — clans that refuse to stop fighting and destroying each other in attempt to reign unopposed in a galaxy characterized by a constellation of tribes. Each of the forces that has been formed to overthrow the established regime is seeking to impose its authority. The unbridled power struggle is thus nourished by rivalries among the leaders of various clans and by their unquenchable thirst for political power commensurate with their moral and religious domination of the members of their respective communities.

The leaders of the Somali factions bear complete and inescapable responsibility for the misfortune that has been visited upon their people and the destruction of their country. They must break the cycle of violence they have put in motion and admit without delay that no faction can long impose itself through force, despite the nature and size of the allegiances and alliances it may have. Those who fight today for claims of ethnic supremacy must understand that the future of Somalia depends first and foremost on their capacity to assume their responsibility to ensure the national unity and territorial integrity of their country. A divided country has no future. It is indispensable for the leaders of the Somali factions to show greater interest in the destinies of their people. They should take a careful look at the rest of the world — particularly at the countries and political leaders who have been able to overcome internal conflicts and strife so as to restore social peace and promote national reconciliation. Ethnic pluralism must become the cement to build a strong and unified nation.

The Somali people look to the Security Council today, following with interest and emotion our deliberations. They wait impatiently for hands to reach out and extricate themselves from the vice in which they have been trapped for years. Of course, our television screens no longer confront us with the horrible pictures to which we were accustomed. The international press has left, and no one remains to bear immediate, direct witness. And yet, is it possible not to hear the cries of distress of those who continue to suffer?

In this connection my delegation welcomes the decision of the Secretary-General to reactivate the United Nations Political Office for Somalia, the role of which is vital in the coordination of the international community's assistance. Contacts already established between the representatives of the United Nations and the leaders of the Somali factions must be continued, because they offer an encouraging sign for the re-establishment of the climate of confidence necessary for fruitful cooperation. We support the idea of the Secretary-General's dispatching a Special Envoy on a fact-finding mission to expand our knowledge of the situation. In fact, it would be useful to create a situation that would lead all parties to accept an effective presence in Mogadishu of the United Nations that could give appropriate consideration to the recommendations that the Secretary-General made in his report of last 17 February.

We must also commend the initiatives of the regional leaders, in particular that of President Arap Moi of Kenya. They have long shown strong and determined interest in achieving a solution to the Somalia crisis. The persistent efforts of the Italian Government are praiseworthy because they contribute to a continuation of dialogue and the establishment of a climate of confidence among the Somalis and the rest of the international community. We hope that the recent initiatives undertaken by the Egyptian Government, under the aegis of the League of Arab States, will result in the organization of a framework of cooperation with the participation of all the Somali parties.

The results achieved at the 3 January 1997 meeting in Sodere must be consolidated so as to make possible the convening of a National Reconciliation Conference on an expanded basis in Somali territory.

Certainly no one can take the place of the leaders of the Somali factions in deciding the destiny of their nation and their people. But it is important for us to emphasize the role of the international community in the pursuit and implementation of the objectives of the peace process in Somalia. This role cannot be played effectively unless the embargo on the delivery of weapons is strictly applied, and unless a clear decision to put an end to hostilities is taken by those who are fomenting strife and who persist in warfare. We expect to see a positive attitude from the clan leaders vis-à-vis the humanitarian organizations, for which they have the obligation to ensure both free access to the needy population and security. The reopening of the Mogadishu airport and seaport in this connection is, we think, a prerequisite and a litmus test.

At a time when a part of the country is stricken by drought and a cholera epidemic has joined the already numerous horrors afflicting the population, Somalia needs humanitarian assistance, which should be sent as quickly as possible, without any impediment or restriction. The city of Mogadishu must be reunified in order to make possible a broad and equitable distribution of food and medical supplies.

We, as Africans, are devoted to Somalia and are thus determined to participate in all endeavours to restore peace to that country. We encourage the international community to explore ways and means to set up an appropriate mechanism which would respond to the most urgent needs of the Somali people. That people must not be held responsible for the vile acts committed by the faction leaders. We could never understand their being abandoned or left to fend for themselves, for it is our moral duty to continue to deal with their fate and to try

to mitigate their suffering. We hope that it will be possible to surmount the difficulties of the past, to overcome the effects of the Somali syndrome so as to make it possible for the Somali leaders to be rehabilitated publicly by striving and succeeding in restoring peace and in taking charge of the destiny of their people in a reunified Somalia, for it is their primary responsibility to secure the well-being of their people.

Mr. Wlosowicz (Poland): We wish to thank you, Sir, for your initiative to convene an open debate on Somalia. We are of the view that matters like the one before us today deserve our constant attention and thorough examination. May I add, however, that the Security Council has never been indifferent to the difficult, complex and sensitive situation in Somalia. The open debate last year and regular informal consultations and briefings on this issue best demonstrate this.

During our last open debate on Somalia, my delegation stated that only national reconciliation can bring peace and stability to Somalia, and that it is the responsibility of the leaders of that country to seek dialogue and political solutions instead of hostility and violence. Such an appeal is very much relevant today. And in fact, at least now, it cannot be overstated.

The situation in Somalia has not significantly changed since we last met in this Chamber to consider it. But there are certain developments which might eventually lead to Somali national reconciliation. We welcome the important meetings in Nairobi and Sodere. In our view, they constitute a significant step forward on the road to peace in Somalia. But they have to be followed by concrete deeds. In particular, the solemn declaration adopted on 3 January 1997 by the majority of the Somali factions will have to be put into operation. Speaking realistically, only then will the community of States be able to constructively assist the process of normalization in this nation which has borne so much.

One cannot question the will of the international community to help Somalia. There are many examples of concern and practical help from States. Here one should speak of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and of the Organization of African Unity countries, in particular Ethiopia, Kenya and Egypt. Also, the Government of Italy should be commended for its important contribution.

It is clear to us that the international community will maintain or even increase its level of involvement provided that all — I repeat all — Somali factions, and especially those of Mr. Aidid and Mr. Egal, use the momentum created at the Nairobi, Sodere and Cairo meetings to pursue the common way to national reconciliation.

As we did last year, we would also like to underline that the full observance of the arms embargo under Security Council resolution 733 (1992) is one of the key conditions for durable peace in Somalia.

Lastly, our delegation wishes to express its satisfaction with the Secretary-General's decision to extend for another six months the activities of the United Nations Political Office for Somalia, which plays an important and constructive role in the international efforts towards the peaceful resolution of the Somali crisis.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Portugal.

The President of the European Union will address the Council later on in a statement that Portugal fully supports.

When we consider the situation in Somalia, it seems easy — perhaps too easy — to succumb to the notion that the international community can do little more than try to deliver the most essential humanitarian assistance. The recent past cautions us to tread carefully. But we must not underestimate the virtues of persistence. The international community and the United Nations in particular still have means at their disposal with which they could make a relevant contribution to shaping events in Somalia.

Although Somalia is not considered a success story for the United Nations, the truth is that the final chapters have yet to be written. We should not give up and deal with Somalia as if it were a lost cause. Indifference must not prevail over hope. We concur with the Secretary-General when he says in his February report on Somalia

> "that the best hopes for restoring peace to Somalia lie in the negotiation of a political settlement entrusting power to a broad-based Government in which all the principal factions will be represented". *(S/1997/135, para. 51)*

In Africa and elsewhere other experiences show that national reconciliation is possible if and when the main players in a conflict agree on some form of power-sharing. Therefore, Portugal considers that the Nairobi

and the Sodere meetings are very important steps in the right direction, and welcomes the proposal for a National Reconciliation Conference, which is scheduled to take place in Bossaso. We call upon all the directly interested parties to participate in this initiative. Failure to do so will only contribute to prolonging the agony of the Somali people and to delaying the dawn of peace in their country.

As the President of the Security Council stated on 27 February 1997,

> "full responsibility for achieving national reconciliation and for restoring peace rests with the Somali people". *(S/PRST/1997/8)*

This simple and fundamental message should not be forgotten by the leaders of the Somali factions, in particular those who refuse to revitalize the political dialogue in Somalia.

In this context, we must commend all Member States that have contributed to mediation efforts in Somalia, in particular Italy, Kenya, Egypt and Ethiopia. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the European Union, the League of Arab States and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development have also been instrumental in this process, and fully deserve public recognition. Strict coordination of these efforts is required. Unity of both purpose and action is vital if we want to persuade the Somali factions to walk in the right direction.

If a serious political dialogue is re-established among the main Somali factions, we sincerely hope that a national reconciliation package will include the following measures: respect for human rights, and an end to the appalling situation still prevailing in the country; the establishment of, and strict adherence to, the rule of law; the creation of a national army and a national police force; and the promise of elections, whenever feasible, to ensure the primacy of democracy. In our view, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia is also a key element. Indeed, territorial integrity is an indispensable part of national unity.

Ideas have been floated with regard to the creation of a joint United Nations/OAU fact-finding mission to examine what more could be done to help the people of Somalia to restore peace in their country, and on the possible designation of a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to support the peacemaking efforts of interested regional States. We are open-minded about the latter idea, although a fresh assessment of the situation should be provided. On the former, we agree with the Secretary-General that it is not evident that a joint fact-finding mission would, at this time, add significantly to their efforts.

I would also like to emphasize the importance the Portuguese Government attaches to strict compliance with the embargo imposed by resolution 733 (1992) on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Somalia. The resumption of the political dialogue in Somalia would certainly enable the international community to respond in a positive way to the appeals of the United Nations to ensure continued relief and rehabilitation efforts in Somalia. As the Sodere declaration states,

> "the rebuilding of Somalia is of such a magnitude as to call for massive international aid in support of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction." *(S/1997/135, para. 42)*

The political and economic tasks ahead truly confront the Somali people with a formidable challenge. But their leaders must understand that if they act wisely the results will be too good to miss. Peace will be their reward.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker is the representative of the Netherlands. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Berteling (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. All associated countries — Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia — have aligned themselves with this statement, as has Norway.

A little more than two years ago, a major United Nations peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), was withdrawn from Somalia. Since then, the conflict between the factions has continued. Many more Somalis have fallen victim to the continued violence. Some progress in the area of reconciliation has been achieved recently.

Today's open debate is testimony to the fact that the international community has not forgotten about Somalia, or abandoned that country. The United Nations Political Office for Somalia continues to make efforts to facilitate

a settlement, and United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations try to alleviate the humanitarian situation wherever they can. The European Commission and its Special Envoy, as well as States members of the European Union, continue their relief activities and rehabilitation assistance to stable areas, where the local authorities are prepared to work together with civil society towards peace and reconstruction. The Somalia Aid Coordination Body plays a crucial role in the coordination of all these efforts, and deserves the continued support of the entire international aid community.

The European Union wishes to reiterate its full support for the efforts of regional and other interested States, as well as those of international and regional organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the League of Arab States, to promote a direct political dialogue and facilitate a broad-based political settlement in Somalia. We salute in particular the initiatives of Kenya, which facilitated the Nairobi agreement, and of Ethiopia, which led to the establishment in Sodere of the National Salvation Council of Somalia. We would also like to commend the efforts by Italy's Special Envoy for Somalia, Ambassador Cassini, for facilitating the dialogue between some of the main faction leaders.

Unfortunately, the results of these efforts have so far not been altogether inclusive, as in every case one or more important players have refused to participate. This points to the need for coordinating the various regional peace efforts and integrating them into one comprehensive political settlement for Somalia as a whole. We should like to reiterate, however, that the ultimate responsibility for achieving national reconciliation and for restoring peace rests with the Somali people themselves. The European Union therefore calls upon all Somali factions immediately to cease all hostilities, and to cooperate with the efforts for peace and national reconciliation in Somalia. We are encouraged in this regard by the recent meeting of the National Salvation Council and by the establishment of the joint committee on Mogadishu, aimed at reaching a political settlement in Mogadishu that could give impetus to the current momentum for dialogue and compromise.

The response from the international community to the most recent United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Somalia has been limited. The European Union encourages all States to continue to contribute generously to United Nations appeals to ensure continued relief and rehabilitation efforts in Somalia, including those aimed at the strengthening of civil society. We expect the Somali factions, for their part, to refrain from violence, to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of all aid personnel and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian relief to the Somali people. The latter requires the opening of the airport and harbour of Mogadishu.

Finally, we wish to recall that there is one more way in which Somalia can be helped to solve its problems: by full and scrupulous adherence to the Security Council embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to that country.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Italy. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): Since January 1991, Somalia has been a country without a Government, without laws, without public order or public services, and without any food security. It has become a country in which, alas, life itself has come to be of little value. The country disintegrated before the very eyes of the international community, while a new type of threat to international peace and security was ushered in, a threat to which the United Nations has so far been unable to respond. In fact, a number of missions, in particular the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), were sent to Somalia to restore peace, but to no avail.

In the vacuum left, Somali civil society has struggled to reorganize at the local level on both the ancient and the new foundations of the communities and on the foundation of the hard work and heavy sacrifices of its people, particularly those of women. Luckily, elders have also continued to be a source of legitimate authority. In this regard, I believe that the ingenuity and the resilience of the Somali people deserve to be recognized and appreciated. These qualities do not, however, supplant the need for a unified State with legitimate central authority and a federal system granting local communities broad powers of self-government.

In the dark years, Italy has not wavered in its commitment to the rebirth of Somalia. Through our contribution to the United Nations missions and throughout our two years as a member of this body, we have tried again and again to find workable solutions to the crisis. Above all, we have tried very hard to keep alive the flame of hope for and trust in a better future for Somalia.

Since leaving the Council, we have been pleased to note that it continues to monitor closely the situation in Somalia. Today's debate is a further confirmation of this. We are indeed very grateful to the Council President, Ambassador Monteiro of Portugal, for calling this public meeting. We hope the meeting will be publicized in Somalia through the media and through every other possible means, so that the Somali people may know directly and personally that the international community has not forgotten them and cares about their plight.

Developments in Somalia in recent months seem somewhat more encouraging. As has been said repeatedly around this table, the Nairobi understanding of 15 October, the Sodere agreement of 3 January and the Mogadishu meeting of 20 January testify to the efforts of several countries and also to the renewed focus of the Somali factions on the need for peace. We welcome the constructive involvement of the Organization of African Unity, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the League of Arab States — particularly Egypt — as well as the more active role played by the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) and the contacts its representatives have made with the Somali leaders in Mogadishu. Now more than ever, we believe that all these efforts must be coordinated and intensified.

The National Salvation Council, which was established by the Sodere agreements, met for the first time from 4 to 8 April in Mogadishu. As has already been noted here, unfortunately, not all factions attended the meeting, nor did Hussein Aidid or Egal of Hargeisa. However, the decisions made at that meeting, particularly the one to convene a National Conference, seem to move in the right direction. To be successful, the national conference for which we hope should be comprehensive, fully reflecting the inclusive approach that was the hallmark of the original Sodere agreements.

Nobody can afford to repeat past mistakes and past absences. Unlike previous gatherings, the forthcoming Conference must indeed be attended by all the main faction leaders, as well as by representatives of Somali civil society. It is indeed high time that all sides, particularly the National Salvation Council and Hussein Aidid, took one step back and showed some flexibility so as to reach a pragmatic agreement on a new institutional arrangement.

Some parties are reportedly considering the possibility of constituting another provisional government, even before a comprehensive agreement has been reached. Frankly, this hypothesis raises concern, since the presence of two self-appointed governments with conflicting claims to legitimacy could only increase tensions rather than alleviate them.

In what we consider to be a positive development, the National Salvation Council instead endorsed the contacts under way to pacify Mogadishu and widen the national reconciliation process. Furthermore, we were pleased to learn that for the second time since the 20 January meeting arranged by Ambassador Cassini, Aidid and Ali Mahdi Mohamed met again on 10 April last. More meetings must follow, because the only way to resolve problems is through talks and personal contacts, not through confrontation and, above all, not through continued distrust. Needless to say, Osman Atto must also join in these meetings. In the end, when the story of this period of Somali history is written, these men should be proud to be remembered as peacemakers and not as warmongers.

Italy is working very closely with two neighbours of Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya, to make a tripartite mission to Mogadishu in the near future. This is another testimony of goodwill towards the Somali people.

I have referred here mainly to Mogadishu, but, needless to say, similar efforts must also be made in the rest of Somalia, particularly in the areas where an atmosphere of confrontation still prevails.

We now understand that Hussein Aidid and a delegation of the Sodere group are right now travelling to several foreign countries. We sincerely hope that all their interlocutors will impress upon them the need for dialogue, flexibility and compromise.

On another count, Italy remains committed to continuing to do its very best to alleviate the humanitarian plight of the Somali people. There will be a new meeting of the Somalia Aid Coordination Body on 29 and 30 May in Rome to examine the humanitarian assistance needed for Somalia. I would like to recall by way of example that last year Italy contributed approximately $9 million worth of emergency aid to Somalia.

I strongly believe that this meeting will be even more successful if it sends a new and very clear message that the Somali factions — all of them, without exception — must carry on the process of genuine national reconciliation. They must focus on the resurrection and well-being of the entire country as their

ultimate objective. The international community should enhance this process by making appeals, exerting influence and providing all the necessary assistance it can muster. Of course, having said this, we are very much aware, as are many others, that in the final analysis the fate of the Somali people lies in their own hands, in the hands of their leaders and in the willingness of their leaders to look beyond past and present differences and instead look forward to a future of a just peace and peaceful development.

In closing, Italy fully subscribes to the statement just made by the Netherlands in its current capacity as President of the European Union.

The President: I thank the representative of Italy for the warm words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Kuwait. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, Sir, on behalf of the Arab Group, which I have the honour to chair this month, I should like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I should like also to pay tribute to the exceptional wisdom and ability that you have shown in presiding over the deliberations of the Council. In addition, I cannot fail to thank your predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Wlosowicz, whose great skill in presiding over the Security Council was witnessed by all those who follow the Council's actions.

We come today before the Council to debate the situation in Somalia, in particular following the developments we have witnessed there at all levels — political, security and humanitarian. I do not believe that I need to speak at length of the grave situation in Somalia and the terrible suffering of its people, beset by a relentless civil war that has serious security and humanitarian repercussions.

That civil war prompted the international community, led by the Security Council, to take steps that we had hoped would put an end to the conflict among warring factions in Somalia. The main objective was first and foremost to alleviate the suffering of the Somali people and to save them from the scourge of a conflict that from the outset had no justification.

The Arab Group, of which Somalia is a member, joins its voice to those of all the States and parties that have repeatedly called for the Security Council to pay continuing attention to, and debate, the situation in Somalia. In this way we, as befits a responsible international community, can defeat the merchants of war and destruction. We can foil their attempts to exploit a fertile land in a conflict whose principal victims are a people whose only fault has been not to find a serious and consistent position from the international community.

The Arab Group therefore welcomes the positive developments on the political level in Somalia, which began with the Nairobi meeting, at which Hussein Aidid joined other factions. Successful Ethiopian mediation led to the meeting between 26 factions on 3 January in Addis Ababa, which culminated in the agreement forming the Somali National Salvation Council and in a pact to continue dialogue with the other Somali factions that were not parties to that agreement.

As a member of the League of Arab States, we are pleased that one of the positive indicators was the participation of the National Salvation Council in a special session of the Council of the League of Arab States, held from 12-14 March of this year. In this context, we must pay tribute to the efforts of the Italian mediator, Mr. Cassini, to intensify consultations among factions leaders so as to promote reconciliation in Mogadishu and reach an agreement on a speedy solution to reopen the capital's airport and port. This in turn would enhance security and stability in Mogadishu. The Arab Group emphasizes the need to make the most of all of these developments in order to bring about the necessary national reconciliation and to create stability.

The Arab States, in their endeavours towards Somalia, proceed from the following principles.

First, Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Secondly, they stress the commitment of the Security Council to a lasting and comprehensive settlement in Somalia.

Thirdly, they call on all Somali factions to cease hostilities forthwith and cooperate with all international and regional efforts aimed at achieving peace and national reconciliation in Somalia.

Fourthly, they encourage States to contribute generously to United Nations appeals to continue emergency assistance and rehabilitation efforts in Somalia.

In this context, I should like to pay tribute to Egypt, Qatar and to my own country, Kuwait, for the financial and in-kind assistance they have provided towards national reconciliation, as well as for their humanitarian assistance and educational support throughout Somalia.

In conclusion, I should like, on behalf of the Arab Group, to appeal to all Somali factions and to the Somali people. We would first urge them to make every effort to convince the international community that they want peace and stability. They can do this only by demonstrating unity and a positive intent towards reconciliation. We also call on the international community to continue its support and assistance to the fraternal Somali people in order to re-establish stability and normalcy in a State that has been torn asunder by savage ambition, which cares little for the dreams of children, their happiness or a people's desire to live in peace and security.

The President: I thank the representative of Kuwait for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Tunisia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): I wish at the outset, Sir, to express our satisfaction at seeing you preside over the Security Council this month. Your great skills and extensive experience ensure that effective work will be accomplished in the area of international peace and security. I should like also to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Zbigniew Wlosowicz of Poland, for his excellent work last month.

The Security Council's consideration today of the situation in Somalia provides us with an opportunity to emphasize the need for an increasingly sustained commitment on the part of the international community to promote the restoration of a lasting peace in that country.

Two agreements were reached among the majority of the Somali factions: the October 1996 Nairobi agreement and the Sodere agreement of 3 January 1997. This is without a doubt one of the promising developments that have recently taken place in Somalia. These agreements show the signatories' awareness and, we sincerely hope their desire to halt the fratricidal war waged by the various factions and to make it possible for Somalia to rejoin the international community.

In this connection, we are pleased that the parties to the Sodere agreement have affirmed their determination

> "to place national interest above selfish clan interests and personal greed and ambition".

This is an encouraging sign that, together with the establishment of a National Salvation Council, opens up real prospects for the rebirth of the Somali State.

In this connection, my delegation wishes to pay a tribute to all regional actors, particularly Egypt, Kenya, Ethiopia and Italy, as well as regional and international organizations and institutions that are working to establish conditions conducive to a settlement of the conflict.

It is essential that such efforts continue and intensify with a view to consolidating achievements. In this connection, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Organization of African Unity emphasized at their recent ministerial meetings the importance of involving all Somali factions in the peace process under way. The factions refrain from any action that could rekindle hostilities and unleash the old demons of confrontation, and they must promote dialogue and the peaceful settlement of their differences.

This would encourage the factions that have as yet not signed the Sodere agreement to do so. Were this to happen, we could then hope that the National Reconciliation Conference envisaged in that agreement would enjoy the participation of all the camps representing the Somali people in order to establish a broad-based Government of national unity.

At another level, mediation and good offices, both regionally and internationally, should be coordinated. In this connection, as the Secretary-General has suggested in his report dated 17 February 1997 on the situation in Somalia, it would be useful to appoint a high-level Special Envoy for the country, whose mission would be to provide liaison among the regional actors and support their mediation efforts.

We believe that the United Nations has a paramount role in the continued mobilization of the international community to create a climate conducive to normalizing the situation in the country. The Security Council has the necessary authority to support those in favour of peace

and persuade reluctant factions to come to terms. The arms embargo decreed in resolution 733 (1992) must be strictly observed by all States.

Regional activities to promote national reconciliation must be supported in various ways by the international community. We fully support the Secretary-General's proposal to set up a trust fund to implement the Nairobi and Sodere declarations.

We would also like to refer to the precarious economic and humanitarian situation of the Somali people at this time. One must emphasize that consolidating progress through national reconciliation requires improving the standard of living of the population. According to the most recent report of the Secretary-General, there may be a nutritional catastrophe if the drought continues in the country.

In this context, the role of the personnel of United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations and humanitarian organizations is helpful in various ways. Working to meet the needs of the people in the best way possible, they continue to carry out their activities in frequently dangerous conditions.

The Somali factions should facilitate the performance of these humanitarian activities and ensure the proper conditions for the reconstruction and economic recovery of the country. For its part, the international community must provide the necessary assistance to consolidate and strengthen the progress that has been made to date in Somalia.

The President: I thank the representative of Tunisia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Ethiopia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mohammed (Ethiopia): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you most warmly, Sir, on your assumption of the high office of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. I wish to thank you in particular for organizing the present debate of the Council on the situation in Somalia, which we hope will be followed by concrete actions in support of the present efforts for peace in that country.

May I also thank your predecessor, His Excellency the Permanent Representative of Poland, for his leadership of the Council last month. I would also like to pay a special tribute to His Excellency Mr. Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the very important and constructive report submitted to the Security Council on the situation in Somalia, contained in document S/1997/135.

The Security Council held its last open meeting on Somalia a little more than a year ago to express concern over the deterioration of the situation in that country at that particular time. Today, although the problem in Somalia is still far from being resolved, this meeting is being held at a time when the prospect of peace seems to be closer and quite promising.

Since the adoption of the Nairobi declaration of 1994, and after more than three years of complete impasse and uncertainty, we have for the first time witnessed in the last six months a promising sign of progress and movement towards peace and national reconciliation in Somalia. This encouraging movement began with the very commendable initiative taken by His Excellency President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya, which, in October of last year brought leaders of the three major Somali groups together in Nairobi.

At the same time, Ethiopia, as mandated by the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), began consultations with all Somali factions with a view to setting in motion direct consultations and negotiations among all Somali political movements and factions. As a result of this initiative by Ethiopia, leaders of 26 Somali political organizations were able to meet for a high-level consultation in Sodere, Ethiopia, and after eight weeks of intensive, frank and responsible negotiations, agreed on a common course of action to resolve the crisis in their country and to put an end to the misery and suffering of their people. The Sodere High-level Consultative Meeting was conducted with commendable seriousness and with a spirit of give and take on the part of the Somali leaders, who put the interests of their nation and the people of Somalia first and high above sectarian and individual interests.

To ensure the success of the Sodere consultations, Ethiopia and the IGAD countries as a whole made all the necessary efforts so that all Somali factions would be represented in the process. To this end, from August to October 1996, as a prelude to the commencement of the High-level Consultative Meeting, a series of consultations were held with the representatives of virtually all Somali

factions. Invitations were extended to all Somali political movements and factions, without exception, to participate in the high-level consultations. In spite of all these efforts, it is indeed regrettable that one of the Somali factions did not participate in the high-level consultations held in Sodere.

Since the very inception of the crisis in Somalia, we have been persistently stressing the fact that the primary responsibility for the solution of the problem in that country lies in the hands of the Somalis themselves, and that the role of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), IGAD, the United Nations and others is to assist and facilitate the efforts of the Somalis. This has also been one of the main guidelines adopted by the member States of IGAD for their efforts for peace in Somalia. The Sodere high-level consultations were initiated and conducted on the basis of this principle.

Acknowledging their responsibility for the future of their country, the Somali leaders undertook, in their Declaration of national pledges and commitments adopted at Sodere on 3 January 1997, to place national objectives over and above clan interest and personal ambition and to work with determination and resoluteness for the revival and renaissance of their nation. To implement these and the other important pledges and commitments, in particular to meet the greater challenge of forming a Central Authority, the Somali political movements established at their Sodere meeting a National Salvation Council, with a mandate to embark on a preparatory course of action that would lead to the establishment of a Transitional Central Authority or Provisional Central Government of Somalia. In pursuing this mandate, the Somali political movements also agreed to convene a National Reconciliation Conference at Bossaso, Somalia, to be followed by a Concluding National Conference to announce the formation of a Transitional Central Authority. We are pleased and encouraged that preparations are currently under way in this direction and that the Somali political movements have agreed, at their recent meeting held in Mogadishu, to convene the National Reconciliation Conference on 10 June 1997, in Bossaso, Somalia.

We are convinced that for peace and national reconciliation to succeed and take firm root in Somalia, it is essential that all concerned parties are brought together and join hands as genuine partners in the ongoing peace process. In this context, the need for the establishment of a broad-based and all-inclusive government in Somalia is one of the guiding principles underlined by the IGAD Heads of State and Government. The Sodere initiative clearly recognizes the need for inclusiveness and sets procedures for the eventual inclusion of all those who might not, for a variety of reasons, have joined the process initially. It is therefore our hope that those who have not joined the Sodere process will do so and come on board. As rightly stated by the Secretary-General in the report before the Council,

> "The onus is now on those who chose not to join in the negotiation of the Nairobi and Sodere declarations. It will be their responsibility if the people of Somalia continue to suffer." *(S/1997/135, para. 51)*

In the past few months, in particular as the result of the recent Sodere agreement, we have witnessed promising prospects for peace and national reconciliation in Somalia. While it should be stressed once again that the solution to the problem in Somalia rests in the hands of its own people and their leaders, the role of the international community in supporting and facilitating these efforts cannot be overemphasized. The Organization of African Unity and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development have been closely following the crisis in Somalia since its outbreak six years ago. The various initiatives, including the recent Nairobi and Sodere initiatives, represent a genuine effort by the regional countries aimed at assisting the Somalis in their endeavours to bring peace and national reconciliation to their country.

We pay tribute to the important efforts that other regional and international organizations and individual Governments, in particular the League of Arab States and the Government of Italy, are making to complement and to assist the ongoing regional peace process.

The role of the United Nations and its Security Council in ensuring the success of the regional effort for peace is particularly important at this critical stage in the evolution of the problem in Somalia. In this regard, we wish to recall that Ethiopia, with a mandate on Somalia from both the OAU and IGAD, and Kenya, as Chairman of IGAD, have submitted a joint proposal to the United Nations, upon the request of the Secretary-General, indicating the areas in which the support of the United Nations would be vital for the success of the regional effort for peace. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for the serious consideration he has given to this joint proposal and for the important observations and suggestions contained in his recent report, which, in our

opinion, should be given serious attention by the Security Council.

In the light of these observations and suggestions, and taking into account the developments in Somalia, we believe the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, should take the following measures. First, as indicated in paragraph 46 of the report of the Secretary-General, the Security Council should call upon all the Somali parties to cooperate with the efforts of OAU and IGAD, and make it clear that the Council will not tolerate any faction's non-cooperation with those who have shown concrete commitment to peace and national reconciliation. Secondly, the United Nations should expand its relief and rehabilitation assistance to Somalia with the clear aim of maintaining and advancing the present momentum for peace and of strengthening the constituencies for peace in the country. Thirdly, to ensure the success of the National Reconciliation Conference, scheduled to take place in Bossaso, Somalia, on 10 June 1997, and to support the regional peace process, the Security Council should request the Secretary-General to establish a trust fund and call upon Member States to contribute to such fund, as is suggested in the Secretary-General's report. Fourthly, the United Nations and its Security Council should emphasize the importance of closer coordination and consultation among those working for peace in Somalia. The new spirit of cooperation and commitment to consultation on the part of the United Nations and others should be welcomed and further enhanced. To this end, proliferation of initiatives needs to be resisted by the United Nations. The role of the Security Council is very crucial in this regard.

We believe the positive developments that have taken place in the last six months indicate that the peace process in Somalia has reached a critical stage. The success of the present efforts for peace depends, first and foremost, on the resolve of the Somali leaders to continue on the path of peace and national reconciliation they have chosen, and to live up to the commitments made under the agreements they accepted. In this regard, we are encouraged, in particular, by the seriousness and the sense of responsibility exhibited by those who participated in the Sodere process and in the subsequent follow-up and further implementation of their commitments under the agreement.

At the same time, it should be stressed clearly that while chances for peace in Somalia seem to be quite promising, one should not underestimate the challenges to success. We strongly believe that the international community in general, and the United Nations in particular, should make a concerted effort to preserve and advance the current momentum for peace and to meet the challenges to it.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate that, for their part, countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development are determined to participate in the efforts for peace in Somalia, and that Ethiopia too will continue to do its utmost in discharging the heavy responsibility, entrusted to it by the regional countries and by the States members of the Organization of African Unity, to assist and to facilitate the search for a lasting solution to the problem in Somalia.

The President: I thank the representative of Ethiopia for the kind words he addressed to me.

There are no further speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.